

"Who Knows?"

Text: "Then Mordecai told them to return answer to Esther, "Think not that in the king's palace you will escape anymore than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise from the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Today and next Sunday our sermons will be taken from the Old Testament book of Esther. You have heard me urge you to read your Bibles from time ~~xxx~~ to time. These sermons are a result of re-reading the book of Esther for the third time. The first two times I read it, no ideas came to me. But just ~~this~~ in the last few weeks I was reading it through, and two very vivid things in this book seemed to leap out at me from its pages. This is the value of reading your Bibles. You may read the same passages over and over and never have a new thought concerning them, but you may re-read them again and have a new and different meaning come to you in this manner. This is also the work of the Holy Spirit within you which we spoke about last week.

To understand what is taking place in our Scripture for this morning, we need to go over some of the background of the first 3 chapters. ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Esther was an orphan who ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ had been raised by a Cousin named Mordecai. Esther and Mordecai were Jews. The king of Persia King Ahasuerus or King Xerxes I which was his Greek name, had thrown several banquets and during one of the banquets he had sent his servants to have the queen make a public appearance before the people. Queen Vashti was a very beautiful woman and the king wanted to show her off in all her finery. But the queen refused to come forward from her quarters and the king was very angry.

At this point he called upon his advisers to inquire as to what he should do. They advised him to write up a decree stating that Queen Vashti was banished from her position and that another queen would be chosen in her stead. So all of the beautiful young ladies in the kingdom were brought to the king ~~xx~~ from which he was to choose a new queen.

Among these young ladies was Esther. Esther found favor in the sight of the king and she was selected to be the new queen. The king did not ask her nationality and Mordecai had instructed her not to reveal it.

In the court of the king there ~~xxx~~ were two conspirators who plotted to slay the king. Mordecai who was at the palace and sat at the king's gate, gave Esther this message which she relayed to the king and the king had them arrested. Thus Mordecai had saved the life of the king.

King Ahasuerus appointed a man named Haman as his Prime Minister. Now Haman had the control over and above all of the princes of the court of the king. All of the princes and all of the servants of the king were commanded by the king to bow to Haman. But we read that Mordecai did not bow to Haman. The king's servants who were at the gate where Mordecai was, spoke to him about this and questioned why he did not bow to Haman. Mordecai merely answered that he was a Jew.

So these servants went to Haman and told him of this and Haman became furious. But Haman in his anger, was not content to merely have Mordecai slain, and thus he devised a scheme whereby all of the Jews would be killed. He plotted to have the ~~xxx~~ entire Jewish nation in Persia killed. Now according to a popular conception of that time, and this is of Babylonian origin, there was a certain time and place to do everything. The book of Ecclesiastes points this out very well. So Haman had lots cast to determine when this destruction of the Jews was to take place.

The calendar at that time ran from spring until the next spring. This was because the ritual of Passover took precedence over everything else. The year thus began in the middle of March which was called the month of Nisan. So in the month of Nisan or ~~March~~ the middle of March to the middle of April, lots were cast for the destruction of the Jews. The day for this destruction fell to the 13th day of the 12th month which was called Adar, and was from mid February to Mid March.

Then Haman went to the king with the news that a certain race of people

which he did not name, had its own laws and did not observe the royal edicts, and he promised the king he would pay 10,000 talents of silver or about 18 million dollars into the treasury if the king would give the edict to have these people killed. The king naturally not wanting to have enemies within his kingdom agrees to their destruction, but he tells Haman he can keep the money he would have donated to the treasury as a reward for getting rid of these people. To show his good faith he gives him his signet ring as a pledge of his faith in Haman.

Thus we arrive at the point where our scripture began this morning where Mordecai is sitting at the king's gate in sackcloth and ashes. Esther learns of this and sends a servant to Mordecai with clothing, and to inquire why he is doing this. Mordecai tells the servant to tell Esther the story, of what is to take place, and since she is the queen to tell the king of this grave injustice. Esther sends the servant back to Mordecai to tell him that even she is not permitted to appear before the king unless he sends for her.

Mordecai tells them the answer they are to give to Esther. He says, "Think not in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at ~~xxxxxxx~~ such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

And it is from this reasoning of Mordecai that Esther sees her true role in this instance and she sends word back to him that she will go before the king unbidden to come forward and she says, "If I perish, I perish."

People have questioned whether this is a true story, and whether it deals with anything worthwhile. Most of the questioning has been because throughout the 10 brief chapters of the book, not once is the name of God used. But if you read the book with the express purpose of trying to see that inspired message God is trying to impart, then I believe you will see the purpose of the book. Woven throughout all of this story is the knowledge that God was having a hand in the lives of each of the characters involved.

If you ask if I believe it really happened, the answer is yes I do.

Archaeological findings have confirmed not only the king of Persia mentioned in the story, but many other things that show it is actual history.

In one commentary I read the question ^{WAS ASKED} why Mordecai did not bow down to Haman, to which it did not give an answer. But if we know Jewish history well enough we know that a real Jew would not bow down to anyone except ^{first 3} God. This was in obedience to the ¹ commandments.

If we look at each part of this story we can see the working of God. First the queen was put away because of her refusal to obey the king. Then along comes Esther and what is she? Of all things she is a Jewess, one of God's chosen people. Then who is it who saves the life of the king? Mordecai another Jew. Thus we can see that God is working in the affairs of man even though ~~we cannot always see it.~~ ^{IT IS NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT.}

Recently we have been hearing an awful lot about Satan and demons. Well this story is a good example of the working of Satan in the lives of people. Satan had worked his way into the heart of Haman, and Haman was determined to destroy the people of Israel. Now why would Satan want to do this? Well, for the simple reason that from Israel was to come the Messiah, the deliverer of God's people. Thus if Satan could thwart this plan, if he could nip it in the bud, then God could not overcome Satan. But we see in each instance that God is in control and that He had placed Esther and Mordecai at this point in time to be His woman and man of the hour. The question that Mordecai poses to Esther is one that should make all of us ponder our relationship to God, when he asks, "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Look at the history of the Israelites right down to our present day. starting with Noah as the first one to be the man of the hour in delivering the people. Then Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, Solomon and on and on. Time after time, people have been inspired by Satan to destroy God's people, but time after time they have been thwarted. ^{BECAUSE GOD HAS RAISED UP MEN & WOMEN OF THE HOUR} In our own day it

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA

TRINITY SUNDAY JUNE 9, 1974

REV. RALPH C. LINK, MINISTER
MRS. VELMA COLLINS, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
JODIE MARTE, MARCIA MCBRIDE - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 10:00 A.M.

PRELUDE MUSIC: "PRELUDE IN E" SERGISSON
"THE HOUR OF WORSHIP" COFFMAN

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 185 "ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME"
*ASCRPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "GRACIOUS GOD, FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU HAVE PROMISED TO RECEIVE US WHEN WE COME TO YOU. WE CONFESS THAT WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED. WE HAVE DISOBEYED YOUR LAW. WE HAVE NOT LOVED YOU OR OUR NEIGHBORS AS WE SHOULD. FORGIVE US, O GOD, AND GRANT THAT WE MAY LIVE AND SERVE YOU IN NEWNESS OF LIFE; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: 'O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE LESSON: ESTHER 4

HYMN No. 191 "BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.

*PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY: "OFFERTORY" WELLS

BAPTISM: ERIC CHRISTOPHER HOLLEFREUND - SON OF
MR. & MRS. THOMAS HOLLEFREUND

PIANO DUET: "SALUT D'AMOUR" ELGAR

KITTY FEDER AND MARILYN STEPHENSON

SERMON: "WHO KNOWS?"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

SINGS"

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 280 "BLEST BE THE TIE THAT

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "ALLEGRO" BROADHEAD

----- *CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY CLARA AND FLORENCE SHAKELY IN MEMORY OF "LOVED ONES". SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *WALLY FEDER, JOHN SNOW, MONT MACKINNEY, JAMES MALONEY AND STEVE VARGO.

ELDER ROBERT TAIT WILL BE AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY BARBARA VARGO AND KAREN KENNEDY.

IF YOU WISH TO HAVE CREDIT FOR CHURCH SCHOOL AND A PERFECT ATTENDANCE PIN - BE SURE TO SIGN UP IN THE NARTHEX UNDER CORRECT DATE.

TODAY - WE NEED A COUPLE OF MEN TO HELP SET UP FOUR TABLES IN THE UNDERCROFT FOR THE TEACHERS TRAINING COURSE ON MONDAY NIGHT.

MONDAY - 7:30 - GOSPEL OF LIGHT TEACHER'S COURSE - MRS. ARTHUR HOUSER WILL BE HERE FOR A TEACHERS TRAINING COURSE. ALL OFFICERS, TEACHERS AND INTERESTED PEOPLE ARE REQUESTED TO BE HERE.

FRIDAY - 6:00 - ARC PICNIC IN THE PARK - MEMORIAL PARK - MILLER SHELTER - DESSERT AND BEVERAGE WILL BE FURNISHED - DAN BOSKO'S IN CHARGE. **ARTEC**

HOSPITALIZED - MRS. HERMAN CUSTEAD AND MRS. HOMER BEATTY.

TODAY - WE HAVE NEW LIVING FERNS ON THE ALTAR - WHICH WERE PLACED BY DONN E. MILLER AS A LIVING MEMORIAL TO HIS "MOTHER" MRS. DOROTHY KALO MILLER. DONN HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR OUR CHURCH, AND NOW HE NEEDS OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS, AND HOPE HE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN TO WORK SOON FROM A SERIOUS BACK INJURY. HIS ADDRESS IS: 6282 BARRADOS AVE., CYPRESS, CALIF. 90630.

NEW PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR FOR THE ARC CLASS ARE AVAILABLE. YOU MAY PICK THEM UP IN THE OFFICE OR FROM AN OFFICER OF THE CLASS. DON'T FORGET TO CALL THE BRUCE MCBRIDE'S 283-8980 NOW FOR RESERVATIONS - FAMILY CAMPING - AUG. 9, 10, 11 - OPEN TO CHURCH.

kings serves question Mord about this
 He merely answer he Jew
 These serves go Haman & tell, he become furious.
 B not content kill only Mord, he devise scheme
 whereby all Jews be killed
 He plot have all Jews in Persia killed.
 According popular conception of time, & this of
 Babylon origin, there cert time place do things.
 Book Ecclesiastes tells this well
 Haman casts lots to determine when this destruction
 of Jews take place
 Calendar that time ran spring til next spring.
 Reason, ritual Passover take precedence all else
 Yr begin mid March which called month of Nisan,
 So in month Nisan or mid March to Mid April in yr
 473 BC lots cast for destruction Jews
 Day for destruct fell 13th day 12th month which
 called Adar, & was from Mid Feb - mid March.
 Haman went king news certain race peop, he no name,
 had own laws, & no observe royal edicts.
 He promise pay 10 M talents silver to treasury if
 king give edict have peop killed. *18 M. Haman*
 king naturally no want enemies in kingdom agrees
 2 destruct, but tell Haman keep money as reward
 getting rid these peop.
 2 show good faith he give signet ring as pledge.
 Thus we come point where Scrip began this morn
 Mord sitting in gate, sackcloth ashes
 Es learns this sends serves with clothes, & inquire
 why he do this
 Mord tell serves tell Es what take place, & since
 she Q, tell king this grave injustice.
 Es sends serv back tell Mord even sh not permitted
 appear 4 king unless he send for her
 Mord tells them ans they 2 give Es,
 (quote Text here)
 & it from this reasoning of Mord that Es sees her
 tru role this instance, & she send word bak she go
 be4 king unbidden
 & she say, "If I perish, I perish."
 Peop have questioned whether this tru story.
 many quest ion whether it deal with anything worth
 This quest cause in 10 chaps, God no mention/while
 But if U read book with exaress purpose try see
 what message God inspired, then I believe U will
 see purpose of book

"Who Knows?"

Text: Esther 4:13,14, answer
 "When Mordecai told them to return to Esther. Think
 no that in the king's palace you will escape any
 more than all the other Jews. For if you keep
 silence at such a time as this, relief and deliver-
 ance will rise for the Jews from another quarter,
 but you and your father's house will perish. And
 who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom
 for such a time as this?"

Today, next Sun serms will be from OT Esther
 U herd me urge you read Bibs from time to time.
 These serms result re-reading Esther 3rd
 1st 2 times I read, no ideas came to me.
 Last few weeks reading thru, 2 vivid things
 almost leap out at me from pages.
 This the valu reading Bibs
 U may read same passage over & over & never new
 thot concerning them,
 But may re-read & new & diff meaning come 2 U this
 This also H Sp within which we spoke last wk /way
 2 Understand what take place Scrip this morn
 We need go over sum background 1st 3 chaps
 Esther orphan, raised by cousin Mordecai
 Es & Mord were Jews
 King Persia Ahasuerus or Xerxes I (Greek name)
 had thrown sever banquets, & during one bang
 sent serves to have queen make appear be4 peop
 Queen Vashti beatiful woman, & king wanted her
 show off finery.
 But Q refuse come 4ward from quarters & king ang
 This point he call on advisors inquire what do
 They advised wite up decree stating Q. Vashti ban-
 ished from position & nother Q to be chosen
 So all beautiful ladies in kingdom brot to king
 from which he choose new Q
 Among them Es
 She find favor his sight, she selected be new Q
 King not ask nationality, & Mord tell not reveal
 In court of king 2 conspirators plotted slay king
 Mord at palace & sit in gate, tell Es, she tell
 king, thus Mord save kings life
 King Ahasuerus appoint man name Haman Prime Minister
 All princes, all serves of king commanded by K to bow
 All bow but Mord.

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.